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Annotated article by George Bain to Globe and Mail, Toronto, 29 September 1962

George Bain

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OXFORD SEPT 29--THIS IS ESSENTIALLY A ONE INDUSTRY TOWN AND THE ONE INDUSTRY IS OLE MISS. THE TOWN HAS A POPULATION OF 6,000 ACCORDING TO THE 1960 FEDERAL CENSUS AND THE UNIVERSITY HAS ALMOST THAT MANY STUDENTS --JUST OVER 5,000.

[THE UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN HERE ALMOST AS LONG AS THE TOWN HAS. OXFORD, THE COUNTY SEAT OF LAFAYETTE COUNTY, WAS INCORPORATED IN 1837 AND IT WAS ONLY ELEVEN YEARS AFTER THAT, IN 1848, THAT THE FIRST STUDENTS ARRIVED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI (TO GIVE IT ITS FULL NAME, AS HARDLY ANYONE DOES).

[OXFORD HAS BEEN TRYING, WITH CREEPING SUCCESS, TO BRING INDUSTRY TO THE TOWN. BUT WITHOUT OLE MISS IT WOULD DIE. THE UNIVERSITY IS ITS ECONOMIC BASE AS WELL AS THE JUSTIFICATION FOR ITS PROUD BOAST THAT IT IS CALLED THE ATHENS OF THE MISSISSIPPI, AS THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE INSISTS THAT IT OFTEN IS.

[ITS ONE OTHER CLAIM TO CULTURAL DISTINCTION WAS THAT WILLIAM FAULKNER LIVED HERE. HIS GREAT PILLARED AND PORTICOED ANTE-BELLUM HOUSE, THE OLD SHEGOG HOUSE IT IS CALLED, AFTER THE MAN WHO BUILT IT IN 1840, LOOKS OUT COOLLY TO OLD TAYLOR ROAD ACROSS AN ACRE OF TREED LAWN. BUT FAULKNER DIED THIS YEAR.

[THE TOWN DOESN'T WANT OLE MISS TO ~~lose~~ ^{follow} HIM. CONSEQUENTLY NO MATTER HOW STRONG THE FEELINGS MAY BE ABOUT MAINTAINING SEGREGATION, AND DOWN HERE THEY TEND TO BE STRONGER PROBABLY THAN ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE COUNTRY, THEY ARE TEMPERED BY CONCERN FOR THE UNIVERSITY.

[IF THE EXCLUSION OF JAMES H. MEREDITH CAN BE ACHIEVED ONLY AT THE COST OF CLOSING DOWN THE UNIVERSITY, OR IF THE EFFORTS TO KEEP HIM OUT COST THE SCHOOL ITS ACCREDITATION, WHICH IN THE END WOULD AMOUNT TO THE SAME THING, OXFORD WOULD DRY UP AND BLOW AWAY.

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[THE MERCHANTS ON THE ~~THE~~ STREETS, AROUND THE COURTHOUSE SQUARE KNOW THAT ^Q AND KNOWING IT, THEIR SUPPORT OF GOVERNOR ROSS BARNETT IN HIS DEFIANCE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS UP TO A POINT ^Q

[SIMILARLY THE STUDENTS: SOME OF THEM HAVE ~~BEEN~~ ALLOWED THEMSELVES TO APPEAR BEFORE THE TELEVISION CAMERAS SINGING GLORY, GLORY SEGREGATION AND WAVING CONFEDERATE FLAGS AND OTHERWISE GIVING VENT TO STRONG FEELINGS ^Q

[BUT IF THEY DON'T WANT THE NEGRO STUDENT IN, THEY ALSO DON'T WANT THEMSELVES OUT ^Q GETTING INTO OTHER UNIVERSITIES WOULD BE DIFFICULT NOW, WITHOUT AT LEAST THE LOSS OF A YEAR ^Q AND WHILE THEY WAITED, THE DRAFT COULD BE COUNTED UPON TO TAKE SOME OF THEM AWAY FOR TWO YEARS IN GERMANY OR SOMEWHERE ELSE FAR REMOVED FROM HOME AND BOOKS ^Q

[THE STUDENTS CANNOT BE INDIFFERENT EITHER TO THE THREAT OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS TO SUSPEND APPROVAL OF ALL STATE SUPPORTED INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN MISSISSIPPI ^Q

[THE COUNCIL SAID THAT SUCH ACTION WILL BE RECOMMENDED UNLESS ASSURANCES ARE GIVEN THAT THERE WILL BE NO FURTHER POLITICAL INTERFERENCE IN THE SCHOOL'S MANAGEMENT SUCH AS OCCURRED WHEN THE GOVERNOR ASKED AND THE BOARD ALLOWED HIM TO BECOME ACTING REGISTRAR SPECIFICALLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF BARRING JAMES MEREDITH ^Q

[IN AN UNACCREDITED SCHOOL THE STUDENTS COULD LOOK FORWARD ONLY TO DEGREES NOT WORTH HAVING ^Q OTHER INSTITUTIONS FOR THE MOST PART WOULD NOT RECOGNIZE CREDITS FROM OLE MISS FROM STUDENTS WISHING TO TRANSFER ^Q

[IT IS LIKELY THAT SCHOLARSHIPS, PARTICULARLY FEDERAL SCHOLARSHIPS, WOULD BE INTERFERED WITH ^Q

Copy next

[ON THE QUIET SATURDAY, TWO STUDENTS WERE DISCUSSING THE SITUATION AND ONE SAID, "I'M FRIGHTENED TO DEATH WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN MONDAY; I'VE GOT NO PLACE TO RUN TO." WHAT HE WAS AFRAID OF WAS THAT ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO REGISTER THE NEGRO STUDENT WOULD BE MADE MONDAY AND THE DOORS OF OLE MISS WOULD BE SLAMMED SHUT IN HIS--AND EVERYONE ELSE'S--FACE, FOREVER; THE NO PLACE TO RUN TO MEANT ANOTHER COLLEGE.

[HE AND HIS FRIEND COMMENTED DOLEFULLY ON THE SITUATION AND THEN THE FIRST SUGGESTED THAT THEIR BEST, THEIR ONLY HOPE, LAY IN THE MERCY OF INTEGRATED NORTHERN COLLEGES. SINCE THESE WERE SYMPATHETIC TO THE CAUSE OF INTEGRATION, THEY MUST ALSO--OR PERHAPS-- OUGHT TO ~~BE~~^{BE} SYMPATHETIC TO THE PLIGHT OF STUDENTS WHO HAD A UNIVERSITY SHOT OUT FROM UNDER THEM IN THE BATTLE OVER IT.

[THE ~~SLEAZEBAG~~ PLEASANT CAMPUS AT OLE MISS DROWNED OVER THE WEEKEND. EVEN CONSTITUTIONAL CRISES HERE PAUSE FOR FOOTBALL AND THE REBELS OF OLE MISS WERE AT THE STATE CAPITAL, JACKSON, SATURDAY NIGHT BENT ~~ON~~ ON THE SLAUGHTER OF THE KENTUCKY WILDCATS.

[MOST OF THE STUDENT BODY WAS IN JACKSON. A FEW STUDENTS, THE BOYS IN BERMUDA SHORTS, THE GIRLS IN SHORT SKIRTS, SAT ON THE STEPS OF RED BRICK RESIDENCES IN THE HOT SUN, DISCUSSING FOOTBALL. THEY DO NOT DISCUSS THE MEREDITH CASE READILY OR ~~FORTHCOMINGLY~~ FORTHCOMINGLY WITH REPORTERS, AND ARE RELUCTANT TO GIVE THEIR NAMES.

[THE UNIVERSITY IS AT THE WEST END OF TOWN. THE HEART OF OXFORD IS THE SQUARE IN THE CENTRE OF WHICH STANDS THE BIG WHITE COUNTY COURTHOUSE BUILDING WITH THE PORTICO AND COLUMNS, THE BENCHES UNDER THE TREES FOR THE LOUNGERS, AND THE CIVIL WAR MONUMENT THAT ARE SOUTHERN CLICHES.

[THERE IS A SMALL WORLD WAR TWO MEMORIAL BESIDE THE FRONT WALK WITH A LONG LIST OF NAMES AND THEN A SECOND, SHORT LIST OF NAMES BENEATH IT, UNDER THE SEPARATE HEAD: "OF THE NEGRO RACE" IN OXFORD, EVEN THE ~~DEAD~~ DEAD ARE SEGREGATED.

[ON A FRONT CORNER OF THE BUILDING THERE IS A SIGN "WHITE ONLY, LADIES REST ROOM" AND INSIDE A SIMILAR SIGN POINTING TO THE SAME FACILITY FOR MEN; NO PROVISION SEEMINGLY IS MADE FOR COLORED BLADDERS. AN APPARENTLY UNSEGREGATED FINE OF \$5, HOWEVER, IS CALLED *PROVIDED* ~~FOR~~ FOR ~~SPITTING~~ SPITTING ON THE FLOOR.

[IN THE MUNICIPAL LIBRARY UPSTAIRS, THE LADY IN CHARGE WAS ABLE TO FIND AS THE ONLY AVAILABLE WORK ON THE TOWN OF OXFORD AN OLD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PAMPHLET, WHICH CONTAINED THIS DESCRIPTION AND VERY LITTLE ELSE:

["LOCATED IN THE NORTH CENTRAL PART OF THE STATE IN LAFAYETTE COUNTY, OXFORD WAS FOUNDED BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR, AND LIKE MANY SOUTHERN TOWNS, WAS ALMOST COMPLETELY DESTROYED BY FEDERAL TROOPS. FOLLOWING INTELLIGENT LEADERSHIP IT SURVIVED THE HARDSHIP IMPOSED BY THE WAR AND EMERGED A PROUD AND PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY. "

[THE WAR HERE IS THE WAR; IF THE FEDERAL TROOPS MARCH IN ~~HERE~~ THIS WEEK, IT WILL NOT HAVE BEEN FORGOTTEN THAT IT IS FOR THE SECOND TIME, AND THAT THE FIRST TIME, ON AUGUST 22, 1864, THEY BURNED DOWN THE BUSINESS SECTION AND SOME OF THE HOMES.

[ONE DRIVES DOWN TO OXFORD FROM MEMPHIS, A DISTANCE OF ABOUT 80 MILES, THROUGH MIXED FARMING COUNTRY IN WHICH THE OCCASIONALLY COTTON FIELDS, BROWN DABBED WITH WHITE PUFFS, ARE ^{now} BEING PICKED. TRUCKS WITH BALES ROLL UP TO THE COTTON BROKERS IN MEMPHIS AND THERE ARE TUFTS OF COTTON IN THE GRASS AT THE SIDES OF THE HIGHWAY.

[ON THE WAY THERE IS HOLLY SPRINGS, WHICH ALSO HAS ITS COURTHOUSE SQUARE ~~Z~~ SMACK IN THE CENTRE, BUT HERE THE COURTHOUSE IS RED BRICK. A PLAQUE SAYS THAT HOLLY SPRINGS IS AN ANTE-BELLUM COTTON TOWN AND CENTRE OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE. IT WAS THE HOME OF 13 ~~CONFEDERATE~~ CONFEDERATE GENERALS.

[ON THE WAY INTO TOWN ON HIGHWAY 78 THERE IS THE MISSISSIPPI INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE, WHICH INCONGRUOUSLY ^{has} ON ITS LAWN ~~IS~~ A SIGN, AMONG OTHERS, WHICH SAYS "BIRD SANCTUARY."

[ONE OF TWO FARMERS STANDING ON THE COURTHOUSE STEPS EXPLAIN^{ed} THAT "THAT'S A NIGGER SCHOOL" ABOUT THE SITUATION IN OXFORD:

"THE SOUTH JUST AIN'T GOIN' TO STAND FOR IT. THERE'S GOIN' TO BE BLOODSHED IF THEY FORCE IT. THE WHITE PEOPLE ARE JUST TIRED OF BEING DONE DOWN BY THE NIGGERS. THE NIGGERS TODAY GOT MORE AUTHORITY RIGHT HERE IN THIS TOWN TODAY THAN THE WHITE FOLKS. YOU JUST STAY AROUND ~~4~~ TILL TWO O'CLOCK YOU'LL SEE IT. WHITE FOLKS GOTTA DODGE THEM BLACK BASTARDS ON THE STREET."

[HIS FRIEND VOLUNTEERED THAT BARNETT MUST KNOW WHAT HE ^{is} ~~was~~ DOING; HE ^{is} ~~was~~ ONE OF THE SMARTEST LAWYERS IN THE STATE.

[IN MEMPHIS, A CAB-DRIVER HAD GIVEN THIS SIMPLE EXPLANATION OF SEGREGATION: "SAY YOU'RE A FARMER AND YOU'RE RAISING CHICKENS AND ^{PIGS} ~~PIGS~~, YOU DON'T KEEP THEM BOTH IN THE SAME PEN. THAT DON'T MEAN ONE'S BETTER THAN THE OTHER; THEY'RE JUST DIFFERENT."

[NORTH OF MEMPHIS, AT THE VAST NAVAL AIR STATION, MILLINGTON, A BASE MAINLY FOR THE TRAINING OF TECHNICIANS, LIEUT.COMM. DAVID W. ROBERTSON, THE INFORMATION AIDE TO ADMIRAL JOSEPH C. CLIFTON, ^{had} ~~was~~ ~~with~~ PROBLEMS.

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GLOBE AND MAIL TORONTO
XXX HIGHWAY

[THE FEDERAL MARSHALS WHO HAVE BEEN ROUNDED UP BY THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT FROM HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE, ARE BILLETED AT MILLINGTON (x) SO ARE THE TROOPS ^{who} ~~which~~ WERE MOVED IN FROM FORT CAMPBELL KENTUCKY (x) LT.COMM.ROBERTSON IS UNDER ORDERS FROM WASHINGTON NOT RPT NOT TO TALK TO REPORTERS ABOUT OTHER THAN ~~SERIAL~~ NAVAL MATTERS; UP TO MIDDAY SATURDAY, LT.COMM. ROBERTSON HAD HEARD FROM UPWARDS OF 150 REPORTERS, NONE OF WHOM WANTED TO TALK ABOUT THE NAVY (x)

[MEANWHILE, SAILORS FROM THE BASE HAVE BEEN CARRYING OUT TALES: NOT ALL THE SOLDIERS BROUGHT IN FROM FORT CAMPBELL WERE INNOCENT ENGINEERS; SOME WERE PARATROOPS (x) THERE WERE 400, 700, 1000 MARSHALS IN RESIDENCE.

[THE MOST RELIABLE FIGURE SEEMS TO BE ~~3~~ 700 (x) ~~XXX~~

~~REPT~~ [ALSO FROM WITHIN ~~THEY WERE~~ MILLINGTON'S WELL GUARDED GATES CAME THE STORY ~~THAT THE~~ FORT CAMPBELL ENGINEER/PARATROOPS WERE MOVED FROM THEIR HOME BASE WITH GREAT HASTE AND WITHOUT BEING TOLD WHERE THEY WERE GOING (x) SOME CONFIDED TO THEIR NEW NAVAL FRIENDS THAT THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE ON THE WAY TO CUBA.

ENDIT-gb

GEORGE BAIN
RM12
HENRY HOTEL

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GLOBE AND MAIL TORONTO